Liberal Religious Thought and Work in Switzerland

Being an address given before the Unitarian Historical Society in Boston, U. S. A., on the twenty-first of May, nineteen hundred and three, by the Rev. Alfred Altherr, Pastor of St. Leonhard's Church, Basel, Switzerland

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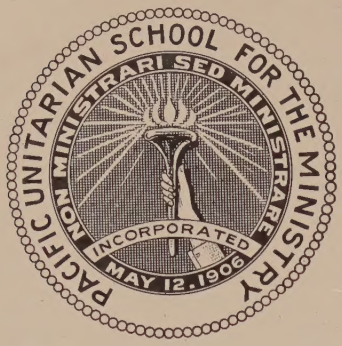

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Liberal Religious Thought and Work in Switzerland

An Address

BY

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PREFATORY REMARK

The following address was delivered in Channing Hall, Boston, Mass., U. S. A., by Rev. Alfred Altherr, of St. Leonhard's Church, Basel, Switzerland, on May 21, 1903, in the forenoon. This was the occasion of the third annual meeting of the Unitarian Historical Society, for which occasion the address was written.

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LIBERAL RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND WORK IN SWITZERLAND.

Many of you, I am sure, know Switzerland, that tiny Alpine country hemmed in between the powerful German empire, decadent Austria, unrestful France, and sunny Italy. And those among you, who have been in Switzerland, may have sailed across the lake of Lucerne and may have seen on the slope beneath the Seelisberg a green meadow, called Ruetli, where in a November night of the year 1307, a few shepherds of Uri, Schwytz and Unterwalden joined hands and swore a solemn oath, that they would trust in God Almighty, and die rather than live to be bondmen.

How dearly we love this Ruetli, will nowhere be understood better than here at Boston. For, if I think of that no less famous spot near Boston, Lexington, and of the 19th of April, 1775, I believe I am justified in saying: "Here is the Ruetli of the United States, of free America; no less the Ruetli of the American Unitarian Association and the Ruetli of the freedom of the colored race."

As all the despotic governments are bound up in close alliance, so are all freedoms and liberties. Political freedom has often paved the way for religious freedom, and vice versa. And it has been truly said: "The service of liberty is a hard service; it gains neither gold nor prince's favor, it brings persecution, hatred, scorn and discord, and yet this service is truly the highest of all." The men of Ruetli and their descendants had for two hundred years to fight enormous odds of enemies, first the Austrians in the east, then the Burgundians in the west, and the Germans in the north. And all the world knows they fought bravely and God bestowed his blessing on them. But it was only in 1648, after the thirty years' war, that Switzerland's independence from the German empire was formally acknowledged.

THE REFORMATION.

I said one liberty will help to bring about another liberty. If it had not been for our political republican liberty, Switzerland would not have obtained its religious liberty in the days of the Reformation. Had Geneva, when Calvin arrived there in 1536, still been under the sway of the

Duke of Savoy, it would not have become a Protestant city. If German Switzerland in 1519 had still been part of Austria, or Burgundy, or Germany, I have no doubt that the spirit of the Reformation would have been stamped out, as it was stamped out on the other side of the Alps, on the other side of the Rhine, on the other side of the Jura Mountains. So we may truly say, that those Switzers, who with sword, halberd and battle-mace fought the battles of Morgarten, Sempach and Næfels, opened the way for Zwingli and Calvin, and Zwingli and Calvin opened the way for the Unitarians of to-day. All the warriors may be called the champions and fore-fathers of liberal religious thought and work in Switzerland. They had another theology than ours, but they had the same religion. They put their trust in God, and did not fear the power of men.

The Catholic Swiss confederates were in their own way very pious indeed. Before going to battle they used to kneel down and pray God and all saints for victory; after gaining the victory they used to return thanks to the Lord of Hosts, and on every battle-field they built a chapel. They honored the pope, who used to deal

most gently with them, calling them "his most beloved sons." But as soon as a priest made bold to extend his power to worldly affairs, encroaching upon their civil liberties, they at once renounced obedience and homage. When in the small canton of Appenzell the clergy threatened to stop all devotional offices, the congregation of those herdsmen in their turn threatened to stop paying their tithes of fruit, milk and butter. They said cheerfully: "Let us see who will hold out longest; whether we can do without mass and absolution, or the priests without bread and butter." And indeed their remedy turned out to be a complete success.

If the Reformation took a different turn in Switzerland, if the change was more broad and more thorough than it was in monarchic countries, it was owing to the right of the people to manage their own affairs. It was not a prince, who decided whether, and to what extent, the church was to be reformed, but it was the democratic government of the people themselves. It was a political representative body that made the changes, and when it hesitated and wavered, the whole population would gather and riot in the streets and

demand the abolition of the mass, or the taking away of images.

When in Basel the town council hesitated till March, 1529, the corporations assembled in arms, demanding that the adherents of the old faith should resign office, which they did, leaving a city which they declared to be "at the mercy of a godless rabble." And when at Zurich, on the banks of the Limmat, the adversaries of the new doctrine asserted that only a council of divines, legally assembled, could deliberate and decide on such things as masses, worshipping of saints, monasteries, etc., Zwingli, pointing to the aldermen, scholars and craftsmen, who were present, exclaimed: "Here *is* a council! Here *are* divines! for we are Christian men, who have received of God himself the inward light, to understand what is God's word and will!" In this manner the work of the Reformation was carried out throughout the cantons of Zurich, Bern, Basel, Schaffhausen, Appenzell, Thurgau, in the west, Geneva, Neuenburg, Waadt, and partially at least in the cantons of St. Gallen, Aargau, Solothurn and Graubuenden.

AN ASYLUM OF REFUGEES.

Because the Reformation in Switzerland had from the very beginning a more liberal tendency than it had in Germany, France and England, our country, like America, was raised to a post of honor by becoming the refuge of all persecuted men. As in the Catholic times, so during the Reformation, and after. Luther, when exercising an intolerant omnipotence, compelled two men whom he could not bear, Ullrich von Hutten, the gallant knight, and Karlstadt, the radical reformer, to seek an asylum at Zurich, where Zwingli stretched out a helping hand to both, granting an office to the latter, and to the former a resting place, where he could quietly lay down his head to die. In 1555 large numbers of Protestant families were expelled from Locarno on beautiful Lago Maggiore ; in the midst of the hard winter they crossed the snow and ice of the Alps, and were received at Zurich with pealing of bells, and fed and sheltered by their loving brethren. Among the Italian emigrants was Lælius Socinus, who died at Zurich in 1562. After the gruesome massacre at Paris, in 1572, the Protestant refugees came flocking across our borders and settled at Geneva,

Bern, Basel, Zurich; and this occured once again after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and during the troubles in England. What America has been practising in a large, an immense measure, since the settlement of English Puritans, little Switzerland has been enabled to do in a smaller measure, the most beautiful, the most Christian of all actions, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to free the captives from their fetters, to stretch out hands to those who are persecuted for justice's sake, saying: "Be welcome, ye blessed in the Lord!" And no less than great America, little Switzerland has received the blessing from invisible hands, God's blessing on liberal religious thought and work!

THE REACTION.

The picture of those great and stirring times in Swiss history was blotted *by one single stain.* Michael Servetus, at the instigation of Calvin himself, tied to the stake, on a hill outside the city of Geneva, was burnt alive for having denied the holy Trinity and the existence of miracles. A single word might have saved him. Being a

staunch Unitarian he did not say it, and suffered death. And we are bound to confess that the Protestant theologians, who at that time occupied the chairs of Zwingli and Luther, at Zurich, Bern and Wittenberg, approved of the crime committed by Beza, Farel and Calvin.

Zwingli would certainly never have committed it, but he had, twenty-two years before, met with his death in a religious war. Nor is it likely that Luther would have acceded to such an act, for it is he who said: "Heresy is a spiritual matter, which you cannot kill with any iron, nor burn with any fire, nor drown with any water!" But Luther, too, had died, seven years before. It was the beginning of Reaction. Moses was gone, and Aaron ruled in his stead, and such is always and everywhere the dullness of reaction. When Moses is on the Mount, Aaron is making calves.

I am not going to give a detailed account of the misery of orthodox state churches in Switzerland. The house of prayer was once more made a house of slaughter. They wrangled about the question whether baptism without exorcism was valid or not. Nobody seemed to know that the

devil was hiding not in the unchristened babes, but in the baptizing ministers, and nobody hit upon the idea of exorcising this devil. There is nothing more absurd than "busy foolishness," says Goethe, and busy they were, those guardians of bigoted religion, in burning witches. "God, what is to become of man!" cried Olden Barneveldt, when standing on the scaffold.

By our faith in God, however, we are enabled to perceive God's doing even in reaction. When in early spring the first flowers are nipped by a frost, we are not to conclude that no spring will be forthcoming, we are merely to understand that it will come later. If a good work does not succeed at the very first outset, we are not to leave off, but to go at it with redoubled vigor. In the Protestant established churches the principle of freedom, of conscience, indeed, had become torpid; but let unbelievers say: "The damsel is dead!" Jesus said: "She only sleeps; she will awake!"

THE FORERUNNERS OF UNITARIANISM.

And she awoke. In England, France and Germany the long night was succeeded by the dawn-

ing of a new day, the day of liberal religious thought and work in a higher form. Let us thankfully remember all those men, who assailed the belief in authorities, even those among them, who did not seek the honor of God, still less the honor of any church. Even then let us remember them, if they made use of scorn and mockery, to fight against superstition, and fiercely cried: "*Ecrasez l'infame!*" In claiming the right of individual conviction even in matters of religion, they served God knowingly or unknowingly. Among the noble crowd of these pioneers were a Protestant king, a Catholic emperor and a pope. The pope dissolved the order of the Jesuits and died soon after a death worthy of the vicar of Christ. The emperor, Joseph II. of Austria, signed in 1781 the edict of toleration, that the Protestants in his empire might be free to worship God in their own way. And Frederick the Great of Prussia uttered these words: "False religious zeal is a tyrant, that depopulates countries; toleration is a tender mother, that makes them prosper. All the religions must be tolerated in my country, for here every man may attain salvation in his own fashion." What

a wise man! Though a king, his statue, offered by the German emperor, seems appropriate to America.

Even for the Roman Catholic church the light of the new day did not shine in vain. It lit up the cathedrals of bishops and the chapels of village parsons. There were in the last century Catholic priests of truly liberal piety. You will allow me to relate a personal experience I had in 1867.

You know that not a few Protestant parishes in Switzerland have to share their houses of worship with their Catholic brethren. In these undenominational churches the priest will hold matins in the early morning; then the Protestant pastor will preach his morning sermon in the same room, surrounded by the images of Mary and the saints, and the whole Christian pantheon, and in the evening the priest will again sing vespers there. That is not all. In the last century it actually happened that Catholic and Protestant parishes joined hands to build a new church together. When in 1867 I became pastor at Lichtenberg, in the canton of St. Gall, such a church was just being built, and when Bishop Carl Johann Greith came to consecrate the new church, I, the Protestant

pastor, was appointed by the Catholic parish to bid him welcome. In my address I referred to our common school, and our common burial-ground where Catholics and Protestants were buried side by side, although at this time such a practice was not yet sanctioned or proscribed by the civil authorities, as it is now. I then said, that it was our firm will, to stick to this union, and that the church, erected by our joint efforts, was to be a symbol and pledge of its continuation. What did His Eminence answer? He had no thought of disturbing this peace, the best foundation of which he considered to be a firm and constant religious conviction on either side, and Christian charity its crown! These were, thirty-five years ago, the words of a Roman Catholic bishop, sitting at the same table with myself. I am sorry I have to say in addition, that this idyll has now passed away from the soil of Switzerland!

Our Protestant church was not only grazed by the new light, but bathed in a glow of fire, which for some time threatened to consume us. The unmatched German, Lessing, clearly defined and declared the end and aim of the Reformation when he uttered this cry of indignation and yearning:

"Luther, thou great, misunderstood man! From the yoke of tradition and superstition thou has delivered us! Who is to deliver us from the more intolerable yoke of the letter? Who is to bring us a Christian doctrine, such as Luther would be teaching now? Such as Christ himself would teach?" Thus Lessing put the question, and we may safely say, that what he was yearning for, has been accomplished, the deliverance from the intolerable yoke by free Bible-criticism. What a huge share of the work has been done by German theology, you were told sixty years ago by the pastor of West Roxbury, Theodore Parker, especially in his translation of De Wette and his treatise on David Strauss.

UNITARIANISM IN SWITZERLAND.

How did things proceed in Switzerland? It took a firm stand. Three German leaders of the new school were called to fill the chairs of theology in our universities, De Wette in Basel, Ed. Zeller in Bern, and D. F. Strauss in Zurich. Mind, it was not any ecclesiastical body, that dared to nominate the boldest champions of Bible-criticism, but political and educational state departments. How did things proceed?

At Basel, it is true, De Wette, gentle, mild, forbearing as he was, succeeded in accommodating himself to local orthodox tradition. When Theodore Parker, in 1844, came to see him, he found him dejected, almost heart-broken.

At Bern, the conservative churchmen eagerly, but ineffectually sounded the tocsin against Professor Ed. Zeller, the Bern people being slow-tempered and wary, and not easily roused.

Zurich, as it had been most audacious in the days of reformation, so it proved now again in calling from Germany D. F. Strauss, the author of "The Life of Jesus," a book, which does not realize, it is true, what the title promises, but which has once for all established the fact that the nature of the writings of the New Testament defeats the attempt to write an historically accurate life of Jesus. The clergy, and indeed, not only the orthodox, sounded the alarm. A scholar of such sound liberalism as Alex. Schweizer, professor at Zurich, warned against the experiment. He may have thought that he who wants to learn mountain-climbing, must not begin by ascending the highest peaks, the Jungfrau, Eiger and Monk! And indeed, the new professor of unbelief was

actually prevented from entering office. A committee for the Defense of Faith was formed, with the purpose of stirring up the people, to overthrow the radical government, which had already incurred the implacable hatred of the conservative party by increasing the government taxes. From words it came to deeds. On the 6th of September, 1839, the alarm-bells were rung from village to village. Armed with old firelocks, scythes, flails and pitchforks, the infuriated peasants marched against the city of Zurich, singing psalms on their way. Chanting the hymn "This Is the Day Which God Hath Made," the enraged multitude pushed on to the cathedral-square, where the militia-men, called out by the government, were drawn up to receive them. The ringleader of the insurgents, a learned but morally unsound clergyman, gave order to fire away in God's name. A member of the government was shot. The military returned the fire, whereupon the multitude dispersed. The government resigned and pensioned Professor Strauss. Strauss accepted the pension and continued to draw it until his death.

But had his adversaries succeeded in refuting

Strauss's doctrine? Your Parker was quite right, in prophesying in 1843: "The truth that Strauss has brought to light, will sink into German theology and mould it anew." In fact, so it happened. The truth is to-day taught at our universities of Basel, Bern, Zurich, Geneva, corrected in details, of course, but not disproved in the chief points. Zurich was able to drive out the man, but not his spirit.

After the struggle the discussion continued. In 1845 "Die Kirche der Gegenwart," a weekly, was started by Professor A. Biedermann at Zurich. In 1859 appeared "Die Zeitstimmen," edited by fiery and spirited Henry Lang. In 1866 "Die Reformblaetter," edited by Alb. Bitzius and the brothers, Fred'k and Edw. Langhaus. In 1870 the "Religioese Volksblatt," first edited by myself and later by Albrecht and Kambli. In 1878 the "Basler Protestantenblatt," edited by myself and several friends,—Bion, Meili, Andres, Braentli, Steiger, Birnstiel and Zwingli Wirth, one of our most powerful preachers. French Switzerland issued about the same time the "Emancipation," the "Alliance liberale," the "Progres religieux," edited by Buisson, Chautre, Cougnard, Balavoine and many others

Taught by liberal professors we could not refrain from preaching what we had learned. Coming from the midst of the people, we felt certain, that the old orthodox tenets had lost their hold on the people's minds, that by expounding Christian doctrine in a liberal manner we would be able to relieve the people from secret doubts and satisfy the religious wants of everyone.

As the orthodox party was organized in the "Kirchlich-Evangelischer Verein," the liberal religious preachers and laymen were organized in the "Schweizerischer Reform Verein," with societies in different cantons, with annual meetings, etc.

What was our aim? To worship God, as our consciences said we ought to do. We wished to be sincere, truthful, consistent; not ambiguous nor double-dealing.

Our antagonists said: "You must worship God as you are told by the old Protestant confessions of faith. More especially as you are told by the Apostles' creed. At Baptism and Holy Supper and confirmation, before adults and young people you have to confess this Apostles' creed!"

We answered: "This creed was not made by the

apostles, nor does it contain the religion of Jesus, or his own gospel. It is the work of the Catholic church councils in the fourth and fifth centuries. At that time it was a necessity, but to us now it is a yoke. Brethren, take it off our necks!"

Our adversaries replied: "If you reject the apostolic creed you reject the foundation of the church and Christ will reject you. Secede from us and found a church of your own."

We answered: "What you believe to be the foundation is but part of the scaffolding that was needed to build, but which is now an impediment. The true foundation is the everlasting revelation of God, and the human soul, which is made to receive it, a divine revelation not by miracles, but by that marvellous order and lawfulness in all things material and spiritual pervading the whole universe; the revelation of God such as Jesus proclaimed and realized in his life. Standing on this foundation we claim our citizenship in the Christian church."

The great contest was carried on in the religious papers, it penetrated into cantonal synods, it was re-echoed from the pulpit, it resounded in political gazettes, in the streets, wherever men and women

gathered to talk. It brought much burning of hearts and grief even into the inner life of families. And the end of twenty years of strife? Neither did we expel the orthodox from our common church, nor could they expel us. One cantonal synod after another, Zurich first of all, decided to make the apostolic creed a matter of option. Each minister was to consult his own conscience, whether he ought to make use of it, or not. And behold! Many of those, who during the controversy had not sided with us, have now likewise dispensed with the apostolic creed.

Does not that remind you of the day, when in this town a number of men and women resolved that Theodore Parker should have a chance of being heard in Boston?

Now, two details of Bern and of Basel.

You know Bern, the city with the quaint old arcades, the city encircled by the rushing green waves of the Aar river, the city blessed with the most magnificent prospect of the shining ice-walls of the Jungfrau, Eiger and Monk. The ecclesiastical authorities of the Bern canton ordained, by a pastoral circular, that the Apostles' creed must be read, otherwise — well, what otherwise? When

A. Bitzius, minister at Twann on the lake of Bienne, a spirited man of a leonine countenance and a leonine courage, received this circular, he at once sat down at his desk and wrote to the venerable consistory: "I herewith beg to inform you, that up to this day I always have, though unwillingly, read in the service the apostolic creed, but henceforth, owing to your pastoral circular, I shall not read it any longer. Reverend Gentleman, come and do your duty." But the gentlemen did not come, well knowing why; for Bitzius was backed up by his congregation, and twenty, thirty others were also backed up by their congregations. So nothing happened, or rather something happened, exactly what Bitzius had wanted. The Bernese cantonal council framed a new ecclesiastical law, granting full liberty of doctrine, and Bitzius himself was elected a member of the cantonal government, and did splendid work till he died in 1882. His device was: "Confide in the people; the people love their idealists!"

Now a few words about the religious warfare at Basel. You know the town situated on the majestic river Rhine, the town noted for its silk manufactures, which have given it the name of "wealthy

Basel" ; and for its missionary schools, which have given it the surname of "pious Basel." Well, this Basel was, until thirty years back, reputed as the stronghold of conservative religious observances. Whereas the Unitarian movement, since 1865, was steadily conquering canton after canton, it was believed, that in Basel at least, it would never get a foothold nor take root. A staunch old member of the government once exclaimed in debate, he was ready to lay his hand in the fire, if under the roof of the Basel church the orthodox and the Unitarian faiths were allowed to live side by side. But God is greater than our hearts, yea, greater than a town-councillor of Basel. When in 1874 a steadfast orthodox minister — all the others were orthodox too — resigned office, the parishioners elected in his place a Unitarian preacher, Penteret, for my duties. At the present day we are eight Unitarian preachers at Basel, and among the twelve dissentient colleagues there are several, who interpret the confession quite as liberally as we do, though standing on the other side. But we had to face fierce conflicts for a good many years. And persecution gave us strength.

I dare say, you will understand with what

feelings we read of the struggles of the Unitarians beyond the ocean, of your Channing and of your Parker. For thirty years Lexington, and West Roxbury, and Boston, and Music Hall, and the words spoken in it for God and mankind, have been household words to me. Every book about Parker, from Albert Réville, John Weiss, Frothingham and Chadwick, brought festival days, and the greatest of all days it was, when two years ago Rev. C. W. Wendte entered my study like a living "Parker Memorial." Once I stood at Florence at the grave of the great reformer and took an ivy leaf home. Now I behold not only a leaf, but a whole tree, a whole forest of trees, the living congregation of Channing and Parker! What I have been fostering for years and years as a fond dream in the inmost recesses of my bosom, has been unexpectedly realized through my visit to Boston.

But to resume. We have liberal religious thought at work not only in the Protestant churches, but also in the state, and here even more political liberty has paved the way for religious liberty, and vice versa. Our standard work, the liberal federal constitution of 1874, was

inspired by men of liberal religious feeling. It was carried through after long and weary years of fierce strife with the conservative party. For it a man whose name must be known to many in America, was fighting in the foremost ranks, Colonel Emil Frey. From 1861 to 1865 he commanded your 24th Illinois Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War, and was made prisoner of war. From 1882 to 1886 he was ambassador of Switzerland at Washington. Among the articles of the constitution concerning religion and churches I mention the following:

1. Liberty of faith and conscience is inviolable.

2. No one can be compelled to participate in any religious community or any religious instruction, or to perform any religious action, nor can any penalty whatsoever be inflicted on a person on account of religious views.

3. Civil marriage.

4. School attendance is compulsory for every child from the 6th to the 14th year; school instruction is gratuitous, and is to be open to the members of all churches and confessions.

5. No one is bound to pay any taxes raised expressly for covering the expenses of worship

of any religious body, to which he does not belong.

6. Burial grounds are under the management of civil authorities.

7. The order of Jesuits and their associates are forbidden to exercise any functions in church or school.

We understand why our Catholic clergymen are much displeased with this federal constitution, for it is liberal religious thought and work. The Protestants have reason to be satisfied. In consequence of the new liberties, it is true, only eighty-six to ninety per cent. of our Christian children are baptized; only seventy to eighty per cent. of our marriages are consecrated by the church. But those who are active members of a religious community, are now doing by their own will what in former days they were constrained to do, and that surely makes up for every loss.

One thing has not changed by the constitution of 1874; each canton manages its religious affairs in its own way. On the part of the Roman Catholics, administration is by four bishops. On the part of the Protestants, administration is by consistories, church-councils and synods, elected

by the male parishioners. In the cantons of Zurich, Bern, Geneva, Basel and some others, the churches are owned by the state, which took possession of them in the days of the Reformation; and the state still bears the cost of worship. In other cantons the churches are owned by the parishes, and the expenses covered by means of church-funds, or by means of rates collected for that purpose, and it rarely happens that payment is refused. At Basel, for instance, all the Protestant churches are the property of the state, and the twenty-two Protestant pastors and two priests of the Christian (old) Catholic congregation are salaried from the public revenue. The two thousand Jews and the thirty-five thousand Roman Catholics defray their expenses of worship from their own pockets.

It is only in French Switzerland that you find an independent disestablished church, to which belong fifty-one ministers in the canton of Waadt, thirty-nine in Neufchatel and a few in Geneva. The secession was occasioned in 1845, by the cantonal council of Waadt demanding the reading of a proclamation from the pulpits, which forty ministers refused to do and were consequently sus pended.

The selection of ministers by the parishes, indeed, still occasions conflicts and struggles between the liberals and orthodox within the boundaries of a single parish, but the actual wants of both sides are now taken into consideration. We often concede pastorates to the orthodox party, and the same consideration is shown to our side by parishes, where the orthodox party commands a majority. This conciliatory policy is, of course, not approved by the intransigent members on both sides, but we believe it to be working satisfactorily. If we demand freedom for ourselves, we must not grudge it to others.

It thus happens that the larger city parishes each have several pastors attached to them, representing different phases of theological opinion, and meeting the varied religious needs of the members of the congregation. Although we do not in Switzerland bear the name Unitarian, we are animated by the Unitarian spirit.

In the Established State churches of the German Swiss cantons there are 816 ministers, in those of the French Swiss cantons 272, altogether 1,088. Of these about 260 are avowed Unitarians. A much greater number are not enrolled on any party

list, because, though inwardly as free as any of us, they think it improper or inconvenient, to set up hostile camps for the sake of different religious views. All the rest may be considered more or less Trinitarians. But their number is diminishing.

ASSOCIATION OF PREACHERS.

Is there any organic connection between the Protestant churches of our twenty-two cantons? The only tie connecting the evangelical churches is of a voluntary and ideal nature. There is the Swiss Association of Preachers, which, it is true, cannot pass any binding resolutions, but which holds annual meetings with sermons, lectures, debates. There you may see, sitting in motley rows, followers of the orthodox, the pietist, the conciliatory parties, of the half-hearted and whole-hearted liberals and reformers. During the period of fierce party-strife there used to be violent altercations, but however violent they might be, when the combatants sat down to their common dinner, the feelings of love and unity would rise uppermost, and what had been separated by theology would be reunited by religion, or, as the scoffers said, by the soup. At the common dinner of the

Association I once heard an old, truly pious man of the orthodox party declare aloud: "I do not know how I should manage to cease loving a fellow minister!" We endeavor to seek peace in the midst of strife.

It is true, the intransigent members of our clergy do not participate in these mixed meetings of the Association. In the parishes of liberal pastors they erect chapels in the name of the Evangelical Church Association, and a kind of sectarian preachers, known by the name of "brethren," are sent to spy out "our liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus." However the cross can be borne. For some years the spirit of controversy and dissension has decidedly abated, owing to the fact, that the younger generations of orthodox churchmen have been deeply imbued with the spirit of liberal theology taught at the universities. I even venture to prophesy that the day will come, when all of us will be more or less Unitarian.

THE PRESENT CONDITION.

At the present time by far the greater part of our higher federal magistrates and of the members of our cantonal governments may be said to be

liberal religious men, it is true, often more liberal than religious. The extreme left of our political representative bodies is made up of Socialists, whose ranks have been swelled by the adhesion of nearly all the workingmen. Religion by them is regarded as a private concern, but they differ widely in interpreting this term. Among many of them there exists hostility against every description of church, but this has abated of late; most of them provide religious instruction for their children. The hunger and thirst for justice is their religion, and they are capable of great sacrifices for this religion.

The teachers of the State schools, especially those of the Protestant districts, are of a liberal religious mind, which is to be accounted for by the fact, that they have been imbued with this spirit by the headmasters of nearly all the cantonal training schools. That is the reason, too, why in Bern, Zurich and Basel the orthodox Protestants have established free evangelical schools and training schools, which exact heavy sacrifices on the part of parents, and are conducted successfully, some even splendidly. The spirit of antagonism against the church among

the teachers of the State-schools is abating. More and more they agree with the inscription on a school-house at Grindelwald:

> School and church side by side,
> Are like two fingers of one hand.

How is it with the works of charity for the benefit of the poor and sick, the depraved and the destitute? In Switzerland they are not for the most part conducted by church communities, but by voluntary associations, in which adherents of all creeds and confessions labor together with indifferentists, and one by one these charitable enterprises have passed over to the civil governments.

You may ask "Are the churches doing nothing?" I trust they are doing something. As the electric tramway in our towns must have its generator of electric power, to make the cars run, so the churches, if they do their duty, will generate willingness in people's hearts, wisdom to see that we are responsible for each other, love to God and man, joyfulness and enthusiasm. Many a one, who believes the church to be perfectly superfluous, a useless, antiquated institution, the fifth

wheel to a car, would be sadly surprised, to see what would happen, if this generator were suddenly to stop working! When steep gradients are to be overcome on Mount Rigi or Pilatus, our modern engineers are rather fond of looking to this useless, antiquated institution for power; they make use of the fifth wheel to make the car move.

One of our most renowned physicians was asked by a supercilious friend, why he still persisted in attending church, although, whatever a parson might have to say, he had known long before, and much better, too? But the physician replied: "My dear friend, I have known all along how soup, meat and vegetables taste, and yet I have never left off eating them."

CONCLUSION.

What is the purpose of my words, to which you have been listening with such great and noble patience?

They are meant to tell, that though America and Switzerland are unequal in many respects, America a huge country and Switzerland a little one, so little that the whole of it might be conveniently placed within the shores of Lake Superior;

though you have another history and other institutions, yet we have many great things in common.

You are republicans, so are we, thank Heaven!

We have our Ruetli and you have your Lexington.

Our fathers fought and bled for our country's independence, so did your fathers, and we shall do as they did, that we may not prove unworthy of them.

We have been delivered from the yoke of popery by the conscience of the blessed reformers; so have you.

From the yoke of protestant orthodoxy you have been delivered by your conscience; so have we.

To us this deliverance brought sad conflicts and sufferings; so it did to you.

God gave us confidence in the future; so He gave it to you also.

You are allowed to worship God according to your conscience in a disestablished church; so are we in the established church.

God is revealing Himself to you continually and more powerfully from day to day; so does the Eternal and Almighty reveal Himself to us.

Liberal scientific theology from Germany crossed the Atlantic, and landed on your shores; and from your shores Channing and Parker and Emerson crossed the Atlantic, and have settled among us in Europe.

When I read on the walls of your handsome meeting-houses this inscription:

> "The Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man, Love to God and man, the leadership of Jesus, salvation by character, the unlimited progress of mankind by the everlasting, and from day to day more powerful and wonderful Revelation of God, of truth and beauty and love"—

then I rejoice to say, that these words are also written in the hearts and souls of many thousands and hundreds of thousands of men and women of my own Switzerland.

I rejoice to bring you their greetings and to beseech you: "Let us seek union, a closer union than we have had till now. Hereafter if you come to us beyond the ocean, to admire our majestic mountains and to refresh your soul and body in the alpine air, do not forget that you are among fellow Unitarians and do not fail to visit us."

You shall find on the walls of our modest homes the picture of many a dear American, on the

shelves the books they wrote, and in our hearts a hearty welcome for you,

Last Sunday I saw in your Second church the bust of Emerson, whose centenary you are now celebrating, and you may be assured that the Old Country will celebrate with you the soul, or rather the oversoul of the man who wrote for mankind, and who said:

"The destiny of organized nature is amelioration, and who can tell its limits?

"The way to mend a bad world is to create the right world.

"In the nature of the soul is the compensation for the inequalities of condition.

"We want men of original perception and original action who can open their eyes wider than to a nationality, namely, to considerations of benefit to the human race."

Yesterday I saw the Craigie House, where Longfellow lived and dreamed. Let me end my paper with some lines of his which seem to me a Unitarian confession of faith.

"My work is finished, I am strong
In faith and hope and charity,
For I have written the things I see,
The things that have been and shall be,
Conscious of right nor fearing wrong,
Because I am in love with love,

And the sole thing I hate is hate,
For hate is death and love is life,
A peace, a splendour from above,
And hate a never ending strife,
A smoke, a blackness from the abyss,
Where unclean serpents coil and hiss.
Love is the holy ghost within,
Hate the unpardonable sin !
Who preaches otherwise than this
Betrays his Master with a kiss."

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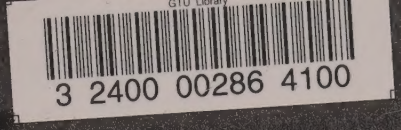
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